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Middle East Situation Report #24
(As of 1100 EST, 27 January 1984)

LEBANON/SYRIA

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Lebanese Army plans to launch a limited offensive on 1 February or earlier.

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- The Eighth Brigade will attempt to sweep across the Alayh ridgeline from Suq al Gharb to take hill 960, which overlooks the infiltration route through Qabr Shamun and dominates the entire ridgeline north to Alayh.
- The Fifth Brigade will move from southern Beirut to Ash Shuwayfat--currently held by Druze forces--thereby attempting to seal off the predominantly Shia southern suburbs.
- The Fourth Brigade will move south along the coastal road toward the Kharrub region between the Awwali and Damur Rivers.

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A heavy snowstorm has prevented major fighting in the Beirut area and in the mountains during the past 24 hours.

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Druze leaders today rejected Prime Minister Wazzan's offer to reinstate the Druze officers who have deserted the Lebanese Army since the fighting last September.

- Druze spokesmen dismissed the offer as a "maneuver" that was meaningless while the Army continued to shell Druze and Muslim positions. The Druze rejection further diminishes the possibility that the security plan can be implemented.

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Two prominent Sunni Muslim politicians--both viewed as moderates--attacked the Gemayel government yesterday. In a press conference, former Prime Minister Saeb Salam complained of the government's "dictatorial domination" over Lebanese political institutions. Former Prime Minister Salim al-Huss told the US Ambassador that there were two "fundamental obstacles" to national reconciliation: the Lebanese-Israeli accord and Gemayel's lack of commitment to political reforms.

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-- Their remarks illustrate the depth of pessimism and animosity toward Gemayel that has become pervasive among even traditional Lebanese politicians.

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The Italian MNF contingent completed a one-third reduction of its troops today, leaving approximately 1,450 of its original 2,000 men in Beirut.

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IRAN-IRAQ WAR

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Iraqi fighter aircraft carried out overflights deep inside Iran, including over Tehran, according to Baghdad and Tehran radio.

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-- The overflights are meant to give credence to Iraq's repeated warnings to retaliate for any new Iranian offensive.

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the Iraq-Jordan oil pipeline deal is falling rapidly into place. Japan will finance construction, but seeks foreign financial guarantees, possibly from Saudi Arabia. Bechtel plans to explore Israeli willingness to make Eilat port available to overcome

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[redacted]
[redacted]
anticipated bottlenecks in importing pipe and other equipment
through the Jordanian port of Aqaba. [redacted]
[redacted]

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-- Israel is unlikely to provide any assistance for Iraq.
[redacted]

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A pro-Iranian group calling itself the "Martyrs of
Baalabakk" has claimed responsibility for the bombing Wednesday
of an Aerospatiale plant that produces Exocet missiles supplied
to Iraq. French police suspect that the same group bombed the
Marseille-Paris express train late last month, [redacted]
[redacted]

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-- This is the first report we have seen on the "Martyrs of
Baalabakk," possibly a pseudonym for elements of the
Islamic Amal or the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. [redacted]
[redacted]

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